



Medicine Man

A cancer cure, the saviour of the Brazilian rain forest and Sean Connery – how could it fail? Just ask Jonathan Shade.



● A year or so ago when there was that flurry of interest in the 'million-dollar script' and studios were bidding for the likes of *The Last Boy Scout* and *Basic Instinct* – plus such still-unmade goodies as *The Ticking Man* – this was one of the most prized items in the auction. Called *The Stand*, a title since changed presumably because of the still-in-development Stephen

King end-of-the-world novel of the same name, the property was rumoured to combine the proven story formula of *The African Queen* with the hot topic of the destruction of the Brazilian rain forest, thus offering Hollywood a whole bundle of things it feels happy with: a) showy parts for box-office stars, b) a big bad thing everybody hates, to stand proudly against, and

c) a plot stolen from something that was a big success. Cast a couple of major league names, or even one first-division star and a feisty up-and-comer, and sign on some brawny director who won't let the eco-intellect get in the way of the fun, and throw millions of dollars at it, and there's no way it could fail.

Except for one little catch. Nobody seemed to notice that it was a rotten script in the first place.

The story is that pony-tailed, guilt-ridden Dr Robert Campbell (Connery), who has spent his life accidentally getting South American Indian tribes wiped out while doing medical research in the jungle, has gone native in the middle of the rain forest, but has accidentally stumbled over a plant that only grows a hundred feet up in this one square mile of the green inferno and which seems to be a cure for cancer. Dr Rae Crane (Bracco), a brassy genius from the Bronx who views a jungle as an excuse for the longest wet t-shirt performance in cinema history, goes out to find Dr Sean and, after the usual squabbling and fussing and straining over the test tubes, falls in love with the Grinning Scots One just in time for the bulldozers to come through and provide some last-reel action.

● Connery och-eyes his way through another hulky old part, while Bracco – so good on her urban turf in *Goodfellas* – struggles in a role so irritating and inconsistent you're surprised Julia Roberts didn't get cast. The storyline can charitably be called insane, what with its fudging of the big issues (*Burning Down*





Forests is a Bad Thing), its ridiculous and pointless last-minute revelation of that secret ingredient that makes a cancer cure possible (Clue: it comes out of ants' bottoms), and the many contrivances required to keep the show on the road. Connery can still turn on the magnetic charm with a younger co-star, but the relationship between him and Bracco never takes fire, and consists mainly of those old jungle favourites, one partner forcing the

other to eat or drink something disgusting and lots of Tarzan-swinging from tree to tree. Nearly two hours with only these two and some restless natives for company is pretty much an ordeal. And you don't want to pay for an ordeal, do you?

So, does anyone want to pay a million bucks for my Save-The-Whale version of Moby Dick, with Tom Cruise as Ahab and Whoopi Goldberg as Queequeg? I thought not.

Producers
ANDREW G. VAJNA/
DONNA DUBROW

Director
JOHN MCTIERNAN

Photography
DONALD MCALPINE

Screenplay
TOM SCHULMAN/SALLY ROBINSON

Music
JERRY GOLDSMITH
(CAROLCO/GUILD)

Johnny Suede BRAD PITT
Dr Robert Campbell SEAN CONNERY
Dr Rae Crane LORRAINE BRACCO
Dr Miguel Ornela JOSE WILKER
Tanaki RODOLFO DE
ALEXANDRE
Jahasua FRANCISCO TSIRENE
TSERE REREME

